

Habakkuk 1:6

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation,
which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess
the dwellingplaces that are not their's.

Analysis

God's response shocks Habakkuk: 'For, lo, I raise up the Chaldeans, that bitter and hasty nation, which shall march through the breadth of the land, to possess the dwellingplaces that are not theirs' (ki-hineni meqim eth-haKasdim haggoy hammar vehanmhar haholekh lemmerchave-eretz laresheth mishkenoth lo-lo). God is actively raising up (meqim) the Chaldeans (Babylonians)—not merely permitting but orchestrating their rise. They're described as 'bitter' (mar, cruel) and 'hasty' (nmhar, impetuous, swift). They will 'march through the breadth of the land' (holekh merchave-eretz)—conquering vast territories. Their purpose: 'to possess dwellingplaces not theirs' (laresheth mishkenoth lo-lo)—seizing lands belonging to others. This is God's answer to Habakkuk's complaint about injustice: He will judge it, but through an even more wicked nation. This creates deeper perplexity that Habakkuk addresses in his second complaint (1:12-17).

Historical Context

The Chaldeans (Babylonians) under Nebuchadnezzar II were emerging as the ancient Near East's dominant power. They defeated Assyria (Nineveh fell 612 BC), crushed Egypt at Carchemish (605 BC), and were poised to conquer westward into Syria-Palestine. Their military reputation was fearsome—disciplined, ruthless, and successful. Within years of Habakkuk's prophecy, Babylon would besiege Jerusalem multiple times (605, 597, 586 BC), eventually destroying the city and exiling Judah's population. God's announcement that He was raising up this

terrifying empire to judge His own people was both stunning and troubling. It demonstrated God's sovereignty over international affairs but raised profound questions about His methods.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Genesis 1:1 — Creation of heavens and earth

Study Questions

1. How does God's use of wicked Babylon to judge less-wicked Judah illustrate the mystery of divine providence?
2. What does this passage teach about God's sovereignty over pagan empires and their role in accomplishing His purposes?
3. How should believers understand God working through evil people and nations without approving their wickedness?

Interlinear Text

כִּי	הִנֵּנִי	מִקַּיִם	אֶת	הַכַּשְׂדִּים	הַגּוֹי	הַמָּר
H3588	H2005	For lo I raise up	H853	the Chaldeans	nation	that bitter
		H6965		H3778	H1471	H4751
וְהִנָּמָה	וְהָיְלָךְ	לְמֶרְחָבִי	אֶרֶץ	לְרִשְׁתָּהּ		
and hasty	which shall march	through the breadth	of the land	to possess		
H4116	H1980	H4800	H776	H3423		
מִשְׁכָּנֵי	לֹא	לֹא				
the dwellingplaces	H3808	H0				
H4908						

Additional Cross-References

2 Kings 24:2 (Parallel theme): And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldees, and bands of the Syrians, and bands of the Moabites, and bands of the children of Ammon, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by his servants the prophets.

Jeremiah 5:15 (Parallel theme): Lo, I will bring a nation upon you from far, O house of Israel, saith the LORD: it is a mighty nation, it is an ancient nation, a nation whose language thou knowest not, neither understandest what they say.

Isaiah 23:13 (Resurrection): Behold the land of the Chaldeans; this people was not, till the Assyrian founded it for them that dwell in the wilderness: they set up the towers thereof, they raised up the palaces thereof; and he brought it to ruin.

Jeremiah 25:9 (Parallel theme): Behold, I will send and take all the families of the north, saith the LORD, and Nebuchadrezzar the king of Babylon, my servant, and will bring them against this land, and against the inhabitants thereof, and against all these nations round about, and will utterly destroy them, and make them an astonishment, and an hissing, and perpetual desolations.